

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO WHITE HOUSE IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 008956

NODIS

FOR DR BRZEZINSKI

FOLLOWING REPEAT LONDON 603 ACTION SECSTATE 12 JAN 78

QUOTE

S E C R E T LONDON 603

NODIS

FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY VEST ONLY

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3

TAGS: PINT IT

SUBJECT: ITALIAN SITUATION

REF: STATE 1988

1. AS WE, THE BRITISH ARE DISQUIETED BY TRENDS
IN ITALY. HOWEVER, OUR CONTACTS HAVE INCLINED TO A VIEW
OF SHORT-TERM TRENDS THAT SEEMS MORE RELAXED THAN OURS,

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THOUGH IN NO SENSE DO THEY UNDERESTIMATE THE LONGER TERM
IMPLICATIONS FOR THEMSELVES, ITALY, EUROPE, THE US AND
THE ALLIANCE OF A DRIFT THAT LEADS TO COMMUNIST PARTICIP-
ATION IN A WESTERN EUROPEAN GOVERNMENT. NONETHELESS,
SENIOR BRITISH OFFICIALS CHARACTERISTICALLY WOULD PREFER,
WE BELIEVE, TO SEE ITALY'S ALLIES NOT FLUSTER BUT RATHER
PURSUE AS ONE HMG SOURCE RECENTLY SAID, A "SERENELY

OPPORTUNISTIC" APPROACH GEARED TO THE EMERGING ITALIAN SITUATION. IN THIS VEIN, WHILE WE BELIEVE THE BRITISH WOULD SEE, AS DO WE AT EMBASSY LONDON, LITTLE VALUE IN US PRESSURE IN THE FRENCH SITUATION, THEY WOULD LIKELY SEE FIRMLY APPLIED LOW PRESSURE FROM WASHINGTON AS OF VALUE IN INFLUENCING ITALY'S EVOLUTION IN THE PERIOD AHEAD.

2. BASED ON CASUAL RECENT SOUNDINGS, WE GAUGE THE FCO HAS CONCLUDED THAT, WHILE THERE ARE PRESSURES IN ITALY FOR A NEW POLITICAL FORMULA WHICH WOULD BRING THE PCI INTO THE MAJORITY, THE POSITION OF THE PCI ITSELF IS AMBIVALENT. WHILE PUBLICLY CALLING FOR A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL EMERGENCY, AND REMAINING COMMITTED TO ESTABLISHMENT OF THE "HISTORIC COMPROMISE," PCI LEADERSHIP, THE BRITISH BELIEVE, IS NOT ANXIOUS TO PARTICIPATE DIRECTLY IN THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT YET. RATHER, THE BRITISH ESTIMATE THAT THE PCI FEARS THE INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL CONSEQUENCES OF SUCH A MOVE AND WOULD PREFER, THEREFORE, TO CONTINUE TO ALLOW THE SITUATION TO MATURE MORE SLOWLY TO A POINT WHERE THEIR ENTRY INTO THE GOVERNMENT COULD BE ACHIEVED WITHOUT DRAMA. MOREOVER, NONE OF THE PARTIES WANT FRESH ELECTIONS, IN THE JUDGMENT OF THE BRITISH, AND THIS, TAKEN IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE GENERAL REALIZATION OF THE NEED OF CONTINUITY IN ORDER TO GRAPPLE WITH ITALY'S PROBLEMS, MAKES IT LIKELY THAT THE SOLUTION OF
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THE PRESENT POLITICAL CRISIS WILL BE LIMITED TO A RE-SHUFFLE OF THE GOVERNMENT, WITH OR WITHOUT THE INCLUSION OF SOME "TECHNOCRATS" ACCEPTABLE TO THE PCI, AND WITH ANDREOTTI CONTINUING AS PRIME MINISTER. AT THE SAME TIME, HOWEVER, UK ANALYSTS BELIEVE IT POSSIBLE THAT A REVAMPED SIX-PARTY AGREEMENT COULD EMERGE THAT WAS WIDER AND MORE DETAILED IN SCOPE AND THAT ALL PARTIES COULD REPRESENT AS INCREASING THEIR INFLUENCE.

3. IT IS OUR IMPRESSION AS WELL THAT THE BRITISH SEE NO SPECIFIC STEPS THAT THE UK CAN TAKE TO INFLUENCE SIGNIFICANTLY DEVELOPMENTS IN ITALY. ON THE ONE HAND, STEPS THAT COULD BE TAKEN SHORT OF DIRECTLY INTERFERING PROBABLY WOULD PROVE LARGELY INEFFECTIVE AND THOSE THAT MIGHT SHARPLY INFLUENCE EVENTS WOULD LIKELY BE POLITICALLY UNACCEPTABLE. IN TERMS OF DIRECT INFLUENCE ON ITALY'S POLITICAL PARTIES, LABOUR GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP SHOWS NO SYMPATHY WITH THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS AND OUR CONTACTS HAVE BEEN INCLINED GENERALLY TO WRITE-OFF THE SOCIALIST PARTY.

4. IN TERMS OF LONGER-TERM, LOW-KEY ACTIONS, WE RECALL

THAT DAVID OWEN'S NOVEMBER 18 SPEECH ON THE COMMUNIST PARTIES OF WESTERN EUROPE AROUSED CONSIDERABLE INTEREST IN THE UK. WE ASSUME AS WELL THAT IT WAS READ ELSEWHERE AS AN OFFICIAL STATEMENT OF THE LABOUR GOVERNMENT'S STANCE ON WESTERN EUROPEAN COMMUNISM. THE SPEECH RAISED POINTED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE EXTENT OF COMMITMENT BY THE COMMUNIST PARTIES OF WESTERN EUROPE TO PLURALIST DEMOCRACY. OWEN ALSO CHALLENGED THE WESTERN EUROPEAN COMMUNISTS TO BE OPEN AND SPECIFIC ABOUT CENTRAL ISSUES, INCLUDING HOW THE MONOLITHIC VERTICAL STRUCTURE OF THE

THREE MAIN COMMUNIST PARTIES IN WESTERN EUROPE DIFFERS FROM THE RULING PARTIES OF EASTERN EUROPE AND THE SOVIET
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UNION.

5. WHILE OWEN'S CHALLENGE HAS NOT RECEIVED THE SAME ATTENTION AS STATEMENTS BY SENIOR US OFFICIALS, IT IS A MATTER OF RECORD AND WE MIGHT URGE THE BRITISH IN DUE COURSE TO REITERATE THESE POINTS. BUT WE DOUBT THEY WOULD BE PREPARED TO TAKE OTHER PRACTICAL STEPS TO INFLUENCE DEVELOPMENTS IN ITALY.

6. GIVEN THE BRITISH PROCLIVITY TO UNDERSTATEMENT, WE DO NOT RECOMMEND THAT WE URGE THEM TO MAKE EITHER FRESH PUBLIC STATEMENTS OR DIRECT DEMARCHES TO GOI OFFICIALS AT THIS STAGE. AMBASSADOR GARDNER'S WIDELY-PUBLICIZED CONSULTATIONS IN WASHINGTON AND THE US STATE-
MENT PLANNED FOR RELEASE JANUARY 12 (STATE 8082) WILL BE NOTED CAREFULLY HERE AS A MANIFESTATION OF CURRENT US CONCERN. THEY WILL ALSO SET THE STAGE FOR ANY FURTHER STEPS WE EVENTUALLY MAY WANT TO ASK THE BRITISH TO TAKE TO REINFORCE OUR OWN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE EXPRESSIONS OF CONCERN.

7. IN PLANNING FUTURE STRATEGY INVOLVING THE BRITISH, WE ALSO WILL WANT TO KEEP IN MIND THAT THEY WILL LOOK TO THE US TO SERVE AS THE PRINCIPAL SPOKESMAN ON THESE MATTERS, BOTH WITH THE ITALIANS AND IN ALLIED CIRCLES. MOREOVER, IT WOULD BE UNPRODUCTIVE FOR US TO ASK THEM TO WEIGH IN TOO HEAVILY AT ANY POINT, FOR THE CALLAGHAN GOVERNMENT WILL RESIST DIRECT UK INTERFERENCE IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF AN EC PARTNER.

8. SUGGEST YOU PASS THIS MESSAGE TO ADDRESSEES OF REFTTEL, AND THAT THEIR REPLIES BE SHARED WITH US.

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BREWSTER UNQTE CHRISTOPHER

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